



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ARMY CENTER FOR ENHANCED PERFORMANCE
UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY
WEST POINT, NEW YORK 10996

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

MADN-ACEP

8 October 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Army Center for Enhanced Performance (ACEP) Executive Summary

1. MISSION: The mission of the ACEP is to develop the full potential of Warriors, family members and DA Civilians using a systematic process to enhance the mental skills essential to the pursuit of personal strength, professional excellence, and the Warrior Ethos.

2. BACKGROUND: Army leadership is aware of the importance of developing mental and emotional toughness to complement its well established focus on physical toughness and the Warrior Ethos. This is evident in the most current Army leadership doctrine, *Army Leadership* (FM 6-22), and throughout the professional education system for Commissioned and Non-Commissioned Officers.

A. The traditional approach to building mental and emotional strength emphasized tough and realistic physical, technical, and tactical training, with the implicit expectation that mental and emotional strength will emerge as a valued byproduct. ACEP accelerates the development of mental and emotional strength through an explicit education and training program designed to teach these underlying skills more directly, resulting in Warriors, family members, and DA Civilians being able to realize and perform closer to their potential earlier in their development. This approach represents a significant shift in the traditional training paradigm.

B. The ACEP program provides a systematic way to build mental and emotional strength using scientifically tested, evaluated, and validated education methods from the fields of sport and performance psychology. This program fills a recognized gap in the Army's doctrine and training that directly addresses the "how," in specifically developing the psychological attributes of the human dimension deemed critical to success on the battlefield and throughout life. ACEP education seeks to provide Warriors, family members, and DA Civilians the skills to be self-regulating, instinctive, adaptive, and mentally agile under intense pressure, while contributing to personal hardiness and resilience.



Figure 1—This illustration depicts the solid training foundation within the Army. However, consistent performance, especially in the face of adversity, requires a certain level of mental and emotional fitness above and beyond that which is provided through physical, tactical and technical training.

3. HISTORY: The Center for Enhanced Performance (CEP) was established in 1993 at the United States Military Academy at West Point by merging the Performance Enhancement Center, created in 1989, and the Reading and Study Skills program, created in the 1940s. The CEP focused on developing Cadets to achieve excellence in the classroom, on the athletic field, and in military training by combining the principles of sport and performance psychology with academic performance strategies. Subsequently, graduates who assumed leadership positions within the Army reached back to the CEP to request training for their current units. Between 1999 and 2004, the CEP responded by sending out Mobile Training Teams to meet the demand in the field. This strategy was initially effective, as evidenced by an increased demand for CEP training, but it quickly outstripped the available resources and thus became unsustainable.

A. In 2004, GEN Peter Schoomaker, then Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), recognizing the demand and need for mental skills education, directed the CEP to develop an Army-wide program capable of meeting the evident training gap within the Army. In 2007, GEN Casey, the current CSA, continues to stress the equal importance of physical fitness and mental and emotional fitness across the Army.

B. In 2007, the first ACEP site opened at Ft. Bragg. As the benefit of the ACEP program was recognized around the Army, eight additional sites were later established at Ft. Jackson, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, DC, Ft. Lewis, WA, Ft. Sam Houston, TX, Ft. Gordon, GA, Ft. Hood, TX, Ft. Knox, KY and Ft. Bliss, TX. The ACEP headquarters is located at West Point, NY.



Figure 2—Map of ACEP sites in CONUS. The nine sites support the WTU, TRADOC, FORSCOM, USASOC and MEDCOM.

4. EDUCATION: The ACEP offers education and training on the Performance Enhancement Education Model and team building. The Learning and Teaching Program, which addresses student and teacher performance strategies is based on the Academic Excellence Program from the West point CEP. The LTP is still in development and currently piloted at two sites of Ft. Bragg, NC and Ft. Sam Houston, TX.

A. The ACEP Performance Enhancement Education Model is based on more than 50 years of documented scientific research and recognized best practices in the field of sport and performance psychology. The tenets underlying excellence in human performance are applicable to all professional occupations. The mental and emotional skills required to excel on the athletic field are equivalent to the skills underlying excellence on the battlefield, in the classroom, in other professions, and at home. Given this understanding of human performance, the ACEP tailors the delivery of the program to meet the needs of a wide spectrum of Army organizations and populations. The ACEP Performance Enhancement Education Model consists of an overview of the foundations of mental skills, and five interrelated key mental and emotional skills:



Figure 3— The ACEP skills of Building Confidence, Goal Setting, Attention Control, Energy Management and Integrating Imagery help give Warriors the tools to achieve Mental Strength for Life.

The knowledge and interrelated skills taught in the ACEP program work together to provide Warriors and family members the tools to achieve the mental strength necessary to reach their potential throughout their entire lives. Education and training in these skills are designed to facilitate optimal human performance, while promoting and contributing to overall hardiness and resiliency.

1. Mental Skills Foundations: Mental Skills Foundations is the base upon which the five mental skills are built. This lesson involves understanding the nature of high performance, the interrelationship between the training and trusting mindset, and identifying the unique relationship between thoughts, emotions, physiological states, and performance. The thought process can be systematically developed and practiced to develop a powerful dominant response under extreme pressure.

2. Building Confidence: Confidence is cited as a critical leader attribute and mentioned over 60 times in FM 6-22. To achieve the highest possible level of performance, an individual must first understand the mental strategies for building, sustaining, and protecting confidence. ACEP works towards educating individuals in understanding how confidence is a result of how one thinks, what one focuses on and how one reacts to the events in life. A confident individual is mentally agile and makes better decisions; thinking in deliberate and effective ways to create energy, optimism, and enthusiasm in the face of adversity and pressure.

3. Goal Setting: The ACEP goal setting process begins by defining a goal that is personally meaningful to the Warrior, family member or DA Civilian and developing the tangible steps to create a well-documented path to success. This goes well beyond the traditional list-making, becoming instead a personal action plan and involving a great level of commitment from the individual. Once a goal has been set in place, the individual goes through the process of creating priorities, actions, and belief

statements. An individual's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are crucial in the accomplishment of priorities that contribute directly to the overarching goals. Goal Setting assists individuals in pursuing and achieving excellence and promotes a culture that moves well beyond norms and minimum standards.

4. **Attention Control:** Like many skills, attention control is a natural ability that can be improved with quality practice. The ACEP model provides individuals with a greater understanding of how attention works, and provides practical techniques for controlling attention in order to achieve greater focus and concentration and learning to be present in the moment. The intent of this process is to leverage the skills necessary for identifying what is relevant and bringing a greater awareness to the most important task worthy of our attention at any given time. Improving attention control also plays a key factor in practicing appropriate and rapid shifting of attention (mental agility) as well as learning techniques for refocusing after losing concentration.

5. **Energy Management:** Both positive and negative experiences can elicit stress responses that require an individual to deliberately and diligently manage mental, physical, and emotional states. In this lesson, individuals are taught the practical skills used to sustain and restore high levels of personal energy while minimizing the negative effects of stress. Individuals will then be able to self-regulate their psycho-physiological responses under pressure by learning to effectively process experiences, thoughts, and emotions. The use of bio-feedback technology and relaxation techniques is also used to demonstrate self-regulation between mind and body.

6. **Integrating Imagery:** Envisioning successful outcomes through detailed mental rehearsals enhances thinking skills and increases confidence and effectiveness. In this lesson, individuals learn to use all of their senses to either create or recreate a powerful, vivid experience in their mind. The utilization of practical imagery techniques can improve all aspects of performance including training, preparing, performing, recovering, and healing. The development and utilization of advanced imagery scripts allows one to envision success and can enhance confidence in one's preparation and presence. Deliberate and meaningful imagery is the "how to" for mental preparation.

B. Team Building: The team building process assists units and groups to further develop and maintain cohesion and create an atmosphere that capitalizes on each member's unique talents and abilities. By total participation in this process, team members produce a unifying team creed that identifies the most important attributes of the collective team, and identifies the underlying actions and beliefs of those attributes so each member of the team has a clear understanding of the expectations and what the team values. The team creed is developed by the entire team and thus adherence is enhanced. Team building can be delivered as a stand-alone workshop or integrated as a capstone exercise to unit/group performance enhancement education and training.

C. Learning and Teaching Program (LTP): The LTP, a developmental pilot branch of ACEP, develops intellectual self-awareness and self-regulation through instruction and application of study skills to increase academic excellence and reduce attrition at academically rigorous Army schools. The LTP also contributes to improving information processing and decision-making within uncertain and complex environments. Some key aspects of the LTP include reading efficiency (speed reading), time management, organization skills and strategies for learning, test taking, note taking, and critical thinking. The LTP is in the pilot phase at Ft. Bragg United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) Language and Culture School and the Ft. Sam Houston Army Medical Center and School.

D. Delivery. There are three interrelated phases in delivery of ACEP education and training: education, acquisition, and application. The education phase involves 8-12 hours of group/unit classroom activity on the Performance Enhancement Model. The Acquisition phase involves an additional 8-12 hours of group workshops and individualized work, and provides the opportunity to practice the skills, develop a working knowledge, and demonstrate proficiency. The education and acquisition phases are usually conducted together and include workbooks. ACEP Specialists can provide follow-up unit support to facilitate the application phase of these skills in a field environment, integrated into existing training plans or other settings, i.e. professional development or FRG training.

The ACEP program tailors the education and training to meet the needs of specific populations. This usually requires initial coordination with the unit leader or representative in order to determine nested outcomes and objectives. ACEP also offers limited “mastery” training for individuals desiring additional personal assistance and is available by appointment.

As a best practice, the ACEP program advocates a systematic approach to the education and training phases so that participants gain a deeper understanding and immersion by using the crawl, walk, run methodology. This approach allows Warriors, family members and DA Civilians to internalize the material, allowing the information to be personalized and easily transferable to other aspects or activities throughout everyday life in garrison, combat and/or at home. The ACEP training philosophy should not be viewed as “quick fix.” The time and effort required to build mental and emotional fitness should be viewed similarly to the time and effort required to build physical fitness. Individuals who understand and practice these mental skills on a regular basis gain habitual and increased self awareness. Applying and practicing mental skills in all aspects of life leads to better self-regulation in challenging circumstances.

5. CURRENT SCOPE: Each ACEP site educates, trains and supports unique populations.

A. ACEP Site Structure: Each location is staffed by a group of experienced professionals consisting of a Site Manager, three to ten Performance Enhancement Specialists (PES), and necessary support personnel. All of the PESs are contracted civilians with a doctoral or master’s degree related to the field of performance psychology. Once hired into the ACEP program, the PESs attend a rigorous four-week certification program at the ACEP Headquarters. Additionally, our PESs are certified, or are pursuing certification, by the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP), which is the internationally recognized governing body within the field.

The ACEP headquarters continues to leverage the unique intellectual capital available at West Point. As a multifaceted institution with a top tier university level education, combined with a premier leader development program, the ACEP headquarters location provides a network with multiple institutions in the field and assists in remaining true to the tenets of performance psychology and academic learning strategies.

B. Current Populations: Currently, the main effort of the ACEP program is support to Warriors in Transition and the staff of the Warrior Transition Units (WTU). Additionally, with nine diverse sites dispersed throughout the Army, the ACEP actively supports the mission of TRADOC, FORSCOM, USASOC and MEDCOM units on a space available basis.

1. WTU triad staff: ACEP provides three days of education on the Performance Enhancement Education Model in support of a two week short course, Warrior in Transition (WTU) Resident Course, conducted by the Academy of Health Sciences, Army Medical Department Center and School, Fort Sam Houston, Texas. This course, offered 6-8 times annually, is designed to provide newly assigned WTU triad staff (nurse case managers, squad leaders/platoon sergeants, and primary care physicians) the foundational knowledge and mental and emotional skills to perform their mission more effectively, and to also mitigate the effects of compassion fatigue.

2. Warriors in Transition (WT): Since September 2008, ACEP has provided education to over 2,000 WTs. ACEP education and training focuses on bridging the gap between the rehabilitation process and the Warrior's transition back into the Army or civilian life by providing the knowledge and skills to craft their future and become inspired about their possibilities. ACEP focuses on abilities versus disabilities, and provides the tools to help change their mindset so that they have a sense of purpose in, and take ownership and control of, their recovery, and to get motivated about their future.

3. Special Operations: ACEP has provided the first two days of education at the USAJFKSWCS Special Forces Warrant Officer Basic Course since August 2006; provided mental strength education to the leadership and elements of the 75th Ranger Regiment, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment and Special Forces A-Teams. ACEP also provides four hours of instruction in the Asymmetric Warfare Group's Combat Skills Training Course. The ACEP education and training provides special operators with the vocabulary and theories required to teach mental skills for thriving in austere and ambiguous environments.

4. Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCT): ACEP continues to support multiple small units within SBCTs in preparation for their deployments in support of the GWOT. Specific applications include applying mental skills training to tasks associated with missions in a MOUT environment. In addition, ACEP has worked with various sniper teams at FT Bliss TX.

5. Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD): ACEP has trained specific THAAD units with over 40 hours of classroom workshops in a three-month period. THAAD operators are required to process vast amounts of information in a very short time period and then make critical decisions relating to engaging targets; the ACEP education and training is provided to this audience as they prepare for potential deployment.

6. Drill Sergeant School: ACEP provides 14.5 hours of education to all NCOs attending the US Army Drill Sergeant School at Ft. Jackson (active component) and Ft. Knox (reserve component). ACEP training prepares the Drill Sergeants to be more effective leaders and who are also capable of providing enhanced coaching techniques in order to further develop an effective Warrior mindset in trainees attending BCT.

7. Other: ACEP is integrated into several Army schools and certifications at FT Sam Houston Army Medical Center and School, to include the Management of Combat Stress Casualties Course (MCSCC), Head Nurse Leader Development Course, Noncommissioned Officer Academy Students Senior Leader Course. In addition, I Corps has directed that all incoming officers assigned to FT Lewis WA, receive an ACEP orientation brief.

8. Family Readiness Groups (FRG): In addition to working with Warriors and units, ACEP has provided education to FRGs in units preparing for and returning from unit deployment. Family members and FRG leaders who have participated in ACEP education have responded positively and are strong advocates of the value that ACEP can provide for families to cope and thrive in challenging periods of separation.

9. Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF): ACEP is currently participating in the planning for the Army's development of the CSF program. These discussions focus on ACEP's contribution to enhancing Warrior and unit performance while contributing to building overall resilience in the Army and its communities. The mission of CSF is to develop and institute a holistic fitness program for Soldiers, Families and Army Civilians in order to enhance performance and build resilience. The intent behind CSF is to increase resilience of Soldiers, Families, and Army Civilians by developing five dimensions of strength: physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and family. This assures an Army of balanced, healthy, self-confident Soldiers, families, and civilians whose resilience and total fitness enables them to thrive in an era of high operational tempo and persistent conflict.

6. RESEARCH/MENTAL FITNESS STUDY: ACEP headquarters retains a research arm to assess the efficacy of the program, participant satisfaction, and to develop evidenced-based future program capabilities. The ACEP research staff consists of 8 personnel who are currently overseeing 12 studies. The

ACEP research team further collaborates with Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, WRAIR, as well as other distinguished universities to further the science of performance psychology. ACEP is currently engaged in assessing the efficacy of the ACEP program in the initial entry training environment. The Mental Fitness Study, directed by the Army G3, reflects an important shift in the way Army programs will be evaluated. ACEP is the first program to be assessed, with significant attention being paid to the magnitude and outcomes of the study. As a result, this study is a crucial element toward the future of the ACEP mission.

7. WAY AHEAD: The ACEP continues to focus on providing support to Warriors in Transition and the diverse Warrior populations within TRADOC, FORSCOM, USASOC and MEDCOM. Future support to the greater Army is dependent upon the efficacy results from the Mental Fitness Study at Ft. Jackson, as well as the input from a dozen other smaller research projects and program assessments. ACEP will provide direct support to the Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program in contributing to the Army's Resiliency program, while continuing to provide mental skills education and training to enhance Soldier performance in specific populations.

A. The ACEP Pilot Program will seek to gain formal recognition in the FY12-17 POM for sustainment and to institutionalize and standardize ACEP throughout the Army.

B. The top priority is to maintain the quality of the program through an aggressive training program for the ACEP Performance Enhancement Specialists (PESs), allowing them to continue to deliver interactive, comprehensive, and applicable mental strength education and training that resonates with Soldiers, family members and DA Civilians. To date, ACEP's coordinated outreach efforts to various organizations and schools have been generated solely on request and reputation built at the local level by the nine ACEP sites.

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